Minutes of Community Workgroup Meeting #5
Plum Brook Reactor Decommissioning
Firelands College
October 17, 2000

Agenda:

1. Introduction & Welcome
2. Review & Approval of May Meeting Minutes
3. Review of October Agenda
4. Reactor Facility Decommissioning
5. Environmental Assessment
6. Pre-Decommissioning Activities
7. Update on Community Outreach Activities
8. Receive Comments on NASA Decommissioning Web Page
9. Other Issues and Topics for the Next Meeting
10. Confirm Date for Next Meeting

The meeting began at 6 PM. Present were the following Community Workgroup members: John Blakeman, Janet Bohne, Mark Bohne, Fred Deering, Bob Speers and Bill Walker. Also present were Tim Polich, Decommissioning Project Manager and four members of his staff - Keith Peecook, Bob Hysong, Jim Gaffney and Hank Bayes - as well as the following NASA Glenn staff:: Sally Harrington, Public Affairs Specialist; Bill Wessel, Director, Office of Safety and Technology Assurance; Mike Blotzer, Chief, Environmental Management Office; and Manny Dominguez, Chief, Safety Office. Additionally, Mark Kessinger and Wes Watson of the US Army Corps of Engineers were in attendance, as were Dave Forth of SAIC and Susan Santos, Terry Flynn and Michael Morgan of FOCUS GROUP.

Tim began the meeting by introducing members of his staff and providing a review of the organization chart for the decommissioning project (see attached). He noted that a lot of progress has been made in putting together the NASA project team since the last Workgroup meeting.

PRE-DECOMMISSIONING ACTIVITIES AND DECOMMISSIONING UPDATE

Tim gave an update on the decommissioning, including what he referred to as "pre-decommissioning activities." The decommissioning team has also done some pre-design investigation (PDI), taking additional soil samples around the facility (near the Pentolite Ditch), and will analyze them for any contamination, radiation, etc. NASA will share that sampling data with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA). The team has also taken core boring samples but found it hard to drill through the bioshield, because of a marble-like substance known as veriteze ore. According to workers involved in building the reactor facility, the ore had been placed in the ground to serve as a shield against gamma rays. The good news, said Tim, was that there was less radiation there than he expected; but it has taken longer than anticipated to complete the core borings.

Over the last several months, the decommissioning team has also been meeting with NASA headquarters, and with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) on project schedules and budget estimates. In addition, there have been meetings with the Ohio EPA and the Ohio Bureau of Radiation Protection. Both state agencies have deferred jurisdiction to their federal counterparts, the US EPA and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). Tim said NASA still agreed to share sampling data with the state agencies.

In terms of the Decommissioning Plan, the NRC has sent back some initial comments on the Plan and will be requesting additional information from NASA. In addition, the NRC sent an inspector to visit Plum Brook Station during the PDI. Tim noted that the inspector had nothing negative to say about the NASA project during his visit.

NRC approval of the Plan is still anticipated by mid-2001, with Tim expecting some additional give and take with the agency over the next few months, then receiving approval and beginning initial work in the fall of 2001. Bill Wessel added that, while there have been some small delays, the time has been well spent by NASA, putting the decommissioning team in place and working out federal sector partnership agreements with the USACE and Argonne National Laboratories.

John Blakeman asked about the Army Corps's role in the decommissioning project and how it compared to the role it is playing on the Ordnance Works cleanup. Wes Watson, the USACE manager for decommissioning at Plum Brook, said USACE stations an office on-site whenever there is a large scale project. He said his primary task is to support Tim on decommissioning, but to also lend support to the USACE office in Huntington, W VA that has oversight for the Ordnance cleanup, and to "make sure everything inside the 27 acre fence" (the perimeter of reactor facility) is eventually decontaminated to the equivalent of "a clean, green field…whether it's decommissioning or TNT… that could be reused for any purpose."

Wes said NASA hired the USACE to provide construction management expertise on the decommissioning and Bill Wessel added that decommissioning was a federal sector partnering activity, and the Corps had experience in dealing with both decommissioning and nuclear waste disposal projects. NASA and USACE agreed to work together through the pre-decommissioning process, "to see how effectively we could team." Bill noted that the team is "on a success route" and expects the agreement to be extended through the life of the decommissioning project; but if there were problems, NASA would still have time to find another contractor. Mark Bohne suggested that, while disassembling the reactor, it would be helpful to collect radiation data from the facility, to show the public that it had remained in good condition for all the years after it was taken out of service. Tim noted that the reactor being decommissioned at Georgia Tech University has been the subject of considerable videotaping and also has a decommissioning Web site, enabling on-line visitors to view and track the project. He promised to take a similar approach, bringing trailers on-site that will be home to cameras. Time-lapse videography may also be employed.

Finally, Tim said that the pre-decommissioning work started last summer will continue up to the start of actual decommissioning. In the meantime, sample swipes from the seven hot cells (taken this summer) will be analyzed, lead and asbestos abatement in non-radiological areas will be conducted and material currently in Hot Dry Storage will be removed, under the terms of the current license with the NRC.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Sally Harrington mentioned the wide variety of information channels to be used during the Community Information Session to follow the Workgroup meeting, including fact sheets, display boards, a video on decommissioning and a Power Point presentation by Sally. Susan Santos added that members of the Workgroup and public were welcome to request NASA speakers and the Power Point presentation. She noted the number of ways - paid advertisements, PSA's, radio interviews with Sally and mailings to 1,200 individuals, organizations and public agencies - that were used to inform the public of the Community Information Session (CIS). She also observed that feedback from last year's CIS indicated that some of the public wanted a more formal NASA speaking presentation at future sessions, and felt the Power Point presentation by Sally would meet that need.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Mike Blotzer gave a presentation on the Environmental Assessment (EA) discussed at the May Workgroup meeting. He reiterated the purpose of the EA: to identify the broad range of potential environmental impacts of the decommissioning project, solicit public input and minimize the impacts while the project was still in the planning stage. When the EA is complete, the availability of its results will be advertised in local newspapers, at

the Community Information Bank at the BGSU Firelands College library and on the decommissioning Web site.

Mike said that a draft of the EA has been completed and is undergoing internal review. The impacts found are primarily limited to the inside the fence line of the reactor facility, along with "minimal impacts" outside of Plum Brook Station. There are no impacts to endangered or threatened species within the reactor facility fence line.

Mike clarified the purpose of NASA's EA from the one conducted by the NRC, which related to terminating the existing reactor license at Plum Brook Station. The results of the NRC EA were published in the Federal Register. NASA's EA focuses on radiological impacts and the exposure potential for decommissioning workers. He reported that these Occupational Exposure Estimates are "very low," - at the peak project, occupational exposure is expected to be no more than 1 REM over a year's time. Average exposure over the life of the project is expected to be no more than half that amount (500 millirems per year).

According to Mike, public exposure estimates are "so low, that you would not expect to be able to measure (them)" throughout the life of the project. He said that safe transportation of waste would keep the estimate as low as projected. John Blakeman asked if the "number of beeps (radiation measurement)…on each side of the fence at all times" would be the same throughout decommissioning and Mike confirmed this assumption. Janet Bohne added that "one REM is not a whole lot…nothing." John Blakeman said that potential exposure to radiation during decommissioning was "the major public issue" on the project. Susan Santos agreed, saying that NASA would put together a display on exposure to radiation specific to the project and make exposure the topic of a future fact sheet. Janet suggested putting radiation badges outside the homes of Plum Brook neighbors, to let them have monthly data on radiation exposure and "calm their fears." Tim added that members of his team will do more environmental sampling (air and water), "on a monthly, rather than quarterly basis" during the project. Monitoring will be done "off station," - out in the community - and the results made available.

Mike Blotzer said that other environmental impacts during decommissioning would include: an increased workforce at Plum Brook - from 100 up to 200; increased truck traffic to remove the waste - increasing by 1-2 trips per week over the current average of 2-7 trips per week; and when the project is near completed and the site is re-graded, there will be dust kicked up in the air and water, "just as on any typical construction project." NASA will undertake dust control methods at that time. Bill Walker asked about the routes the trucks will take and whether public safety officials will be kept informed. Mike said they would, but that it was too early in the process to identify the routes. He noted that Route 250 (Milan Road) is scheduled for a widening project, and mentioned the possibility of not routing truck traffic on Route 250 during road reconstruction.

Mike noted that NASA wanted public comment on times throughout the year that it should consider not sending trucks over Route 250, considering the heavy use of the road

to Cedar Point during the summer. NASA is allowed 90 days from the time waste is removed from the reactor facility to actually move it to a disposal site. Mike suggested that this time could be used to work with the community - in to ensure that it not be sent during high traffic periods such as Memorial Day and still allow for timely and safe shipment.

Another impact being considered in the EA is the historical significance of Plum Brook Station. NASA has been attempting to reach agreement, on the historic value of the Plum Brook Station reactor, with the Ohio Office of Historic Preservation; but said the latter agency has been focusing its attention on the City of Cleveland's plan to take land formerly used by NASA Glenn and make it part of the expansion program at Hopkins International Airport. In the interim, NASA will hire someone to record historic information on Plum Brook and review artifacts for possible historic significance.

All the EA information will be used by the decommissioning project team, to identify ways to minimize impacts wherever possible. Mike expects the EA done by the end of the year, and be followed by a public comment period. If there are no significant impacts found - as currently appears to be the case - NASA will publish a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). If any significant impacts are found, NASA will prepare and release an Environmental Impact Statement. Mike also encouraged Workgroup members to provide comments on the EA, once it is released.

NEXT MEETING

The Workgroup meeting was shortened to allow for the start of Community Information Session. Prior to the close of the meeting, Susan Santos solicited Workgroup suggestions on information that should be included on the Web site, and on topics for the next meeting. NASA is planning a presentation on Health and Safety at the next meeting and Mark Bohne suggested one on training for decommissioning workers. Susan also suggested obtaining some tape on training procedures. Workgroup members and NASA staff agreed that the next Workgroup meeting will take place on Tuesday, January 23, 2001 from 7 PM to 9 PM. Mark has secured the Bettcher Room at BGSU Firelands College for the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 PM.